

**IAB Response to Fire Apparatus Magazine Article titled
“FEMA Wants All SCBA Replaced”**

RE: NFPA Standard 1981 on SCBA cylinder interoperability

Robert Ingram, Chief-in-Charge, FDNY Haz-Mat Operations and Chair of the InterAgency Board (IAB), responded to this article with a letter to Fire Apparatus Magazine focusing on several issues. These are itemized below as separate points. The article states that responses and comments will be published in the next issue and the IAB looks forward to the publication of this letter clarifying Mr. Jorgenson’s statements.

Point 1. C. Peter Jorgensen, the author is also the publisher of Fire Apparatus Magazine. He makes several statements in the article as if he had actually spoken to the IAB including that “we are confident our planned change to NFPA 1981 will be adopted and is on schedule for mandatory compliance in August 2007.”

Mr. Jorgensen has never contacted the IAB Chair or the Program Manager Office for our comments or opinion. Chief Ingram provided background information on the IAB, its mission and membership including SEL work and our website. Ingram explained the IAB’s connection with the sponsoring federal agencies through the Federal Agency Coordinating Committee and that the IAB provides an independent responder voice to the FACC and the responder community on relevant issues.

Point 2. Mr. Jorgensen writes “The IAB proposal is about to be forced down the throat of the NFPA.”

The IAB has written and forwarded only one letter to the NFPA on this issue. It came to the floor of the IAB as an actionable item during the October 2004 meeting. It was presented by the NFPA representative as an issue stuck in committee that they were working on but could not move. It was proposed and voted on by a majority of board members present, to send a letter to the Standards Council of the NFPA requesting a Tentative Interim Agreement for this requirement. It was felt that this would initiate movement within the committee. The IAB did not submit a proposal solution, simply requested the committee to take action. The letter also recognized the fact that there were, and still are “technical and equipment issues that need to be addressed to make interoperability a reality.”

Point 3. Mr. Jorgensen states it is of little matter to the IAB that 30-minute cylinders only provided approximately 18 minutes of air before requiring refilling.

Chief Ingram directed Mr. Jorgensen to our website to see our membership. Ingram pointed out that the IAB’s membership, 125 at this time, consists of local

and state first responders (roughly 50%) and federal employees working in response, standards development, testing facilities and research & development. The IAB is very concerned with the end user needs and familiar with them on a first hand basis.

Point 4. Mr. Jorgensen writes “manufacturers will begin selling only baby blue SCBA bottles, regardless of the color you have now.”

Chief Ingram responded that Fire Apparatus should use its magazine to address the real issues in depth, such as: backwards compatibility and adaptor kits including cost, the value of NIOSH certification and the work they have done to accommodate cylinder interoperability, and federal grant funds to pay for mandated changes. He should give his readers and the IAB membership more credibility than to think we have an issue over simply color.

Point 5. Mr. Jorgensen quotes Lt. Bull of the Fairfax County Fire Service as “objecting to the 11th hour push by the NFPA Technical Committee under threat that the IAB or FEMA will do something if they do not.”

Chief Ingram wrote that this issue was in fact included in the current working edition of the NFPA 1981 Standard, published in 2002, as a work project for the committee to address and has been stuck in committee since. It is not an 11th hour issue, but one that has been around for some time.

Point 6. Mr. Jorgensen writes that the “IAB is also charged with working on communications interoperability and, not having any success there, is apparently looking for an easy win on the SCBA bottle standard.”

Chief Ingram stated that the IAB is not charged with communications interoperability, that this is a charge of several federal agencies. The IAB’s mission is to identify gaps in equipment technology, standards development and testing requirements that have an impact on the emergency service community. These gaps are prioritized by the members of the IAB and submitted to the federal partners on the coordinating committee for action. One such action includes the work on Project 25 and the associated suite of standards for radio interoperability.

Point 7. Mr. Jorgensen writes that the public comment period will be “just a pro-forma exercise.”

Chief Ingram wrote that it is important for all user communities to be involved in standards development, technology issues, legislation and funding issues that have an impact on them. Whether they are a large or small agency, they should submit their comments and concerns to the committee for review. If the community comments show that this issue is not ready for inclusion in a standard, then it should be pulled from the draft until such time as it is practical; Consensus standards should be just that. Every community; users,

manufacturers and regulatory agencies should have a voice in order to provide the best possible solutions for the end user, the emergency service community.

Point 8. Mr. Jorgensen writes that the IAB proposal would “outlaw the Scott Snap-Change, replacing it with an inferior system.”

Chief Ingram has personally spoken to Scott and Drager representatives and discussed other options to this issue, that the interoperable cylinder was not the only solution. The IAB believes that the best features of all manufacturers would be the most likely path to follow. The Drager representative told Chief Ingram that he thought several of the Scott design features were the most likely to be used. In the end, the IAB is concerned with the end user, not the manufacturers who have other agendas including a monopoly on parts because they are the only suppliers of parts certified for their equipment. If we end up with a better system to provide more surge air capacity that is what we should pursue.

Point 9. Mr. Jorgensen writes that the Fairfax County Fire Department was the incident commander at the Pentagon attack on September 11, 2001.

Chief Ingram refers Mr. Jorgenson to Chief Schwartz of the Arlington County Fire Department, a member of the IAB to verify who the Incident Commander was at the September 11, 2001 Pentagon response.